Brandeis University

Crown Center
for Middle East Studies

Mailstop 010
Waltham, Massachusetts
02454-9110

781-736-5320
781-736-5324 Fax
www.brandeis.edu/crown

Middle East Brief

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The Shiite Community in Lebanon: From Marginalization to Ascendancy

Dr. Yusri Hazran

In the Lebanese parliamentary election held on June 7, 2009, the Hizballah-led opposition increased its seats by only one, from 56 in 2005 to 57. The Western-leaning coalition managed to hold on to its parliamentary majority, winning 71 seats compared to 72 in 2005.[1] While at first glance, it appeared that Hizballah had failed to reap the political rewards of the July 2006 war and the 2008 Doha agreement, which had given Hizballah the power to veto major government decisions,[2] a closer look reveals that the main loser of the elections was Michel Aoun, the Christian Maronite Ally of the Shiite opposition.

The poor showing of Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement diminishes Hizballah's maneuvering room and constitutes a serious moral and political setback for the Syrian- and Iranian-backed forces. Still it would be unreasonable to think that the election results will lead to Hizballah's disarmament or undermine its control over the decision-making process in Lebanon. The results could even lead to a contrary outcome, provoking debate over the legitimacy of the Ta'if agreement and might even pave the way toward its modification.[3]

Even though the Shiites have yet to translate their demographic superiority into political power within the Lebanese constitutional institutions, the political developments of the last three years leave no doubt that the Shiite community already controls access to political power in Lebanon and that no government can rule without the approval of Hizballah. This brief will explore the transformation of the Shiite community from the most disadvantaged community into the most powerful one in Lebanon. In terms of domestic politics, the Shiite achievements reflected particularly in the Doha agreement should be seen as the culmination of a

historical process that led to the emergence of a powerful Shiite community. I will argue that that process grew out of a combination of four factors that related to the Lebanese state's policy vis-à-vis the Shiite community but also reflected regional changes: the community's population increase and demographic shift, its militarization, the social and political mobilization of the Shiite masses, and the securing of external patronage by the Shiites.

The Shiite Community in Lebanon: An Overview

Like the Sunnis and the Druze, the Shiites were not a party to the establishment of Greater Lebanon by the French colonialism in 1920. Through the annexation of their territory to Lebanon, Shiites became citizens of a new state that they identified with Maronite hegemony and Western imperialism.[4] In principle, the French mandatory authorities did not deviate from their predecessors' tradition of ignoring and excluding the Shiites. Still, in 1926 they became the first to confer on Lebanese Shiites the status of a recognized religious community with its own autonomous juridical system. Lebanon's independence and the establishment of the 1943 National Pact between the Maronite and Sunni elites did not halt the discrimination against and exclusion of the Shiite community (though it was awarded the speakership of the parliament within the confessional system); the Shiite experience within independent Lebanon remained largely one of alienation and impoverishment.

The underrepresentation of Shiites was mirrored in the Lebanese government. Empirical studies on Lebanese bureaucracy during the period preceding the second civil war show that the Shiites were the most poorly represented in the administration.[5] But its underrepresentation in the civil service was not the only Shiite grievance; an additional source of unhappiness was that the greatest portion of the Shiite population lived in the areas bordering Israel. For many years, Shiites complained that they were abandoned by the state to their fate in the face of Israeli retaliatory operations, first against the Palestinian guerillas and then during the military occupation in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The 1989 Ta'if agreement increased the Shiites' parliamentary representation (from 19 seats to 27, out of a total of 128 seats), putting them on an equal footing with the Sunnis. Yet it was accepted by the Shiite leadership with great reservations, not only because it was achieved through Saudi mediation but also because it did not accede to their political demands: namely, the elimination of the confessional system or, at the very least, increased Shiite representation commensurate with the community's demographic size.[6] There was ample justification for such reservations, given the fact that the Shiite community had become, since the 1980s, Lebanon's largest confessional group.

The Shiite Demographic Revolution

In addition to suffering from continued political marginalization, Shiites had long been the most underprivileged community in Lebanon, by any definition. The vast majority of Shiites belonged to disadvantaged social groups—the peasants and the working class—and lived in underdeveloped rural areas and poor suburbs. It is ironic that the roots of the Shiite ascendancy lay precisely in these disadvantaged circumstances—for it was the demographic change that the Shiite community underwent over the last few decades that made possible the radical politicization of Shiite collective consciousness that has placed them at the center of the political game in Lebanon.

Although no census has been taken in Lebanon since 1932, it is commonly believed that the Shiites have become the single largest religious community in Lebanon, constituting approximately 40 percent of the entire population (or 1.6 million out of a total population of 4 million).[7] The table below shows that the birthrate of the Shiite community is the highest among all Lebanese communities;[8] as a result, the Shiite community has

Dr. Yusri Hazran is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Crown Center.

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doubled its demographic presence in the country over the seven decades from 1932 (19.6 percent of the total population) to 2005 (approximately 40 percent).[9]

Percentage Growth of the Shiite Population

Year	Shiite Population	Total Lebanese Population	Percentage
1932	154,208	785,543	19.6%
1956	250,605	1,407,868	17.8%
1975	668,500	2,550,000	26.2%
1984	1,100,000	3,757,000	30.8%
1988	1,325,000	4,044,784	32.8%
2005	1,600,000	4,082,000	40%

Sources: Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, p. 50; Johnson, *All Honourable Men*, p. 3; Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlhor, *Shiite Lebanon*, p. xii; UN, *World Population Prospects*.

Imam Musa al-Sadr, the founder of the Amal movement and the most charismatic leader of the Lebanese Shiites in the twentieth century, was the first to mobilize the Shiites' demographic advantage to advance their political rights. As a Shiite cleric, al-Sadr repudiated the political discourse of the leftist parties during the 1970s, which called for the secularization of the Lebanese state. Al-Sadr did not strive to convert Shiite demographic power into political representation in order to seize power over the state; instead, he sought to reconfigure the confessional system by increasing Shiite participation in decision-making and local politics. Nabih Berri, Amal's leader since the early 1980s, redefined the political goal of the movement as the full elimination of the confessional system; nevertheless, inspired by al-Sadr's pragmatism, he was ready to tolerate establishing a new power-sharing scheme that would provide his community with a greater measure of representation.[10]

Hizballah provides a unique example of political realism in this regard. Ideologically, the party has been committed to two main ideas: the abolishment of the confessional system and the establishment of an Islamic order.[11] However, since the end of the second civil war, the party has integrated into Lebanese political institutions. Such activity did not imply recognition of the system's legitimacy, but Hizballah considered it the only means available to promote the Shiite community's interests and protect Hizballah's military organization.[12] The long-term ideological goal of creating an Islamic order remains, but the realization of this far-reaching goal is conditional on achieving a demographic majority. So from Hizballah's point of view, "an Islamic order" is a euphemism for Shiite domination over the Lebanese state.

The Shiite demographic power for Hizballah—more than for Amal—must be conceptualized within a substantial programmatic political orientation. Bearing this in mind, Amal as well as Hizballah, spare no effort in seeking to manipulate demographic realities for immediate political benefit—for example, by demanding that the electoral law be amended to reduce the voting age to 18 and to make Lebanon one constituency. These reforms would give the Shiite community the means to exert over-proportional influence on the parliamentary election process in general and to determine other sects' elected representatives, particularly in constituencies in which Shiites constitute a majority.[13] Such an outcome would be related to the nature of the Lebanese electoral system: While the right to stand for office is confessional, the right to vote is not. This means that voters can vote for all available confessional seats (candidates), regardless of the confessional community to which the voter belongs. Consequently, Shiite voters' support for a certain candidate in a district where they constitute a majority would give that candidate a majority even if that candidate failed to win the support of his own community.[14]

In addition, the strength of the connection between urbanization and political participation is well established—and the history of the Shiite community in modern Lebanon provides a conspicuous example of this process. The political activism in which the Shiite urban masses have been involved since the late 1960s allowed the community to play a dominant role that, though still not reflected within the formal politics of the state, could shape political processes and outcomes. The social impact of the Shiite population increase, along with the massive Shiite emigration to Beirut, has put effective tools of political control in the hands of the community's leadership. If during the first decades of Lebanese independence the Shiite community was situated on the margins of the state, geographically as well as politically, the concentration of a huge Shiite mass in the capital has endowed the community with the ability to affect the center of Lebanon's political and economic life.

By the eve of the second civil war, Shiites constituted more than half of the inhabitants of Beirut and its suburbs. That the bulk of these immigrants were members of low-ranking social and economic groups only facilitated the task of mobilizing them for protest activity.[15] This advantage was revealed again in the May 2008 crisis, when Hizballah and Amal mobilized the Shiites masses in Beirut so as to paralyze Fuad al-Sanyoura's rival government.

The Rise of Shiite Militancy

Hizballah's military organization was the only militia not disarmed following the end of the second civil war in 1989; the struggle against the Israeli occupation of part of southern Lebanon was invoked to justify this exceptional violation of the state's sovereignty. The new circumstances created after the hasty Israeli withdrawal in May 2000 led Hizballah to modify this rationale to include liberating the Sheba Farms area and providing Lebanon with deterrent power in the face of "Israeli aggression."[16]

Hizballah's military organization currently enjoys unchallenged military superiority. The 2006 July war demonstrated

Hizballah's excellence as a military force; its May 2008 blitz was followed by the Doha agreement, under which the opposition, led by Hizballah, was given veto power over the government's decisions.

The militarization of the Shiite community, though it cannot be divorced from the social and political crisis that engulfed Lebanon during the period prior to the second civil war, has been deeply intertwined with Lebanon's entanglement in the Arab-Israeli conflict and Israel's policy toward Lebanon since the late 1960s. Since that time, the Shiite population in Lebanon has been particularly vulnerable to and affected by the escalation of the conflict. This is clearly indicated in the names adopted by Shiite military organizations which emphasize the armed struggle against Israel: Amal is an abbreviation of *Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniya* (Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance), while Hizballah's military arm has been called *al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyah fi Lubnan* (The Islamic Resistance in Lebanon).

The Palestinian guerillas and leftist parties were attractive to many young Shiites, who identified with their revolutionary and antiestablishment stance. The affinity between the underclass Shiites and the Palestinian-leftist forces in fact dates as far back as the Shiite mass immigration from the periphery to Beirut in the 1960s. Detached from their social settings and making up what Michael Johnson calls a "belt of misery," peasant and sub-proletarian Shiite immigrants in Beirut fell outside the established patronage systems of the city after having being excluded from those in their native periphery. Accordingly, they sought not only to overcome their socioeconomic misery but to topple the political status quo—and those goals inclined them toward the left. Many young Shiites joined various Palestinian organizations and other leftist militias.[17]

The military persistence of the PLO in the south, on the one hand, and escalating Israeli reprisals, on the other, exposed Shiite civilians in the south to increasing risk to their persons and property. Against this background and mindful of the chronic weakness and inferiority of the Lebanese army, al-Sadr established the Amal militia three months after the second civil war broke out. It became more urgently needed in the wake of the ethnic cleansing launched by Christian militias against the Shiite slums in east Beirut. Additionally, behind the creation of Amal was an attempt to curb the growing influence of leftist forces, particularly the communists. The fact that the Shiites suffered their heaviest casualties at the beginning of the civil war in 1975–76 gave al-Sadr reasonable ground to believe that the anti-establishment front led by the Druze leader Kamal Junblat (also known as Kamal Jumblatt) had been exploiting the Shiite masses in its struggle against the Christians.[18]

Although the founding of Amal was an important step in the militarization of the Shiite community, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 was undoubtedly the most crucial event in this regard. At first, many Shiites welcomed the Israeli army, seeing its arrival as signaling an end to PLO domination in the south. However, the unlimited support the Israelis provided to the Phalangist government (whose militias eradicated the Shiite suburbs in east Beirut) and the prolongation of the military occupation turned the Shiites against their "new liberators." The role of the revolutionary Iranian regime should also be mentioned here, as Iran served as an essential agent in mobilizing the Shiites against Israel—which by invading Lebanon had ironically created the breeding ground for the establishment of Hizballah.

Since its inception, Hizballah has been engaged in stubborn guerilla warfare against the Israeli army, resulting in Israel's unconditional withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000. The Israeli withdrawal was consistently presented by Hizballah as an unprecedented military victory, which for the first time in the Arab-Israeli conflict compelled Israel to withdraw from an occupied Arab land without a peace treaty or security arrangements.[19] On top of the withdrawal of May 2000, Hizballah's impressive military achievement in the 2006 July war has enormously increased its political prestige inside and outside Lebanon and contributed to consolidating the Shiites' political stature, positioning them at the center of the decision-making process.[20]

In May of 2008, the militias of the two parties seized west Beirut, the stronghold of the Sunnis led by Sa`d al-Hariri, to break the deadlock that had paralyzed Lebanon since the resignation of the Shiite ministers in November 2006. It was the first time since the end of the second civil war in 1989 that Lebanon had witnessed such levels of sectarian violence. But the limited scope of the action, both geographically and temporally, confirmed that the Shiite leadership was conscious of the limits on converting military power into political power under the current internal and regional circumstances.

The Social and Political Mobilization of the Masses

Historically, radical political change has often been linked to charismatic leadership—and that association has applied in this case: The social and political mobilization of the Shiite masses, which in the long run brought about the decline of the traditional leadership, could not have taken place without the emergence of a new type of political leadership, represented by al-Sadr. The Shiite community had long been subjected to the authority and control of six prestigious feudal families: al-Asad, al-Khalil, al-Zayn, Hamadah, Usayran, and Haydar. Antoine Messarra shows how the leadership of the Shiite community between the years 1920 and 1975 was monopolized by these six families in addition to three non-feudal ones: Baydoun, al-Fadl and al-Abd allah.[21] The traditional leadership was primarily interested in preserving its political power and promoting a self-serving agenda. Though they controlled land, wealth, and access to political power, these families failed to accommodate the new demands of their coreligionists, or to adjust their politics to their community's changing needs.[22] As in many

similar cases throughout history, the traditional leadership failed to recognize the consequences for their community of the changes that that community was undergoing: in the case of the Shiites, immigration, urbanization, and political mobilization. Yet the traditional forms of socialization and politics upon which that leadership's authority was contingent collapsed under the impact of those changes.

The penetration of the Shiite community by leftist and anti-establishment parties was a sound indication of the increasing erosion in the legitimacy of the traditional leadership, as these forces were the first to contest that leadership's political authority.[23] Still, it was the challenges presented by al-Sadr beginning in the late 1960s, and later by Hizballah, which led to the diminishment of that leadership and its eventual replacement by the parties of Amal and Hizballahr.

While the anti-establishment coalition sought to appeal to all Lebanese aspiring to change the confessional system, al-Sadr's project addressed the particular grievances of the Shiite community. Al-Sadr's charismatic personality clearly played a key role in establishing his position as an authentic and powerful leader, but he did not come to politics purely based on personal prestige. Al-Sadr's appeal must be explained by his political activism and his ability to mobilize the Shiites' collective consciousness by reinforcing their inner convictions about the community's unique identity and its special role in Lebanese political life. This activism was expressed in two steps: providing the Shiites with their own communal political and social institutions[24] and presenting an assertive discourse of social justice.

In this regard, al-Sadr's activity was undoubtedly a formative event in the modern history of the Lebanese Shiite community. What exacerbated the traditional leadership's crisis of legitimacy was the fact that al-Sadr knew how to enlist his religious knowledge and prestige in the service of his political goals. By infusing the Shiites' religious traditions with political meanings drawn from their contemporary experience, he transformed Shiite religious symbolism and doctrine into a coherent mobilizing ideology. And by conflating political activism and religious authority, he was able to undermine the credibility of the traditional elite. The collapse of the Lebanese confessional system, with which that elite was identified, in 1975, followed by the defeat of the anti-establishment coalition and the assassination of its leader, Kamal Junblat, in 1977, were important developments paving the way for Amal's political domination of the Shiite community.

Al-Sadr's mysterious disappearance in 1978, the Islamic revolution in Iran, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 created fertile soil for the rise of Hizballah. The new movement dramatically changed the political reality of the Shiite community by introducing a new type of leadership and discourse. Unlike al-Sadr, the Hizballah leadership challenged the power structure in ideological terms, questioning the legitimacy of its political regime and arguing for the establishment of an Islamic order in Lebanon. Additionally, instead of basing its authority on a discourse of justice, the new leadership invoked armed struggle against Israel as its fundamental ideological foundation. Without neglecting the social needs of the community, Hasan Nasrallah, who has led the party since 1992, has elaborated the idea of fighting Israel (*al-muqawamah*, or "the resistance," in Hizballah's terminology) as the leading "cause" of the Lebanese Shiites.

Indeed, Hizballah's pragmatism with respect to domestic politics does not apply to the conflict with Israel. Rather, the party has embraced a maximalist ideology which seeks the annihilation of the "Zionist entity." This uncompromising position was frequently reiterated by Nasrallah himself. Criticizing the incapacity of the Lebanese army to protect Shiite civilians during the July 2006 war, he illuminated the ideological aims of his movement by saying: "We have not been asking the Lebanese army to create miracles, we have not been asking it to liberate the seven villages, nor to liberate Palestine nor to return the holy city of Jerusalem."[25]

In reality and from the perspective of domestic political strategy, the emphasis on the conflict with Israel reflects quite pragmatic thinking. Hizballah recognizes that the multifaceted, sectarian society of Lebanon does not lend itself to becoming an Islamic society, and that any attempt to impose such could invite widespread domestic and regional opposition. The struggle against Israel, on the other hand, has always been a unifying issue in Arab politics. Thus, the extremism manifested against Israel must be seen as a means of political mobilization and legitimization and of attaining political power. Hizballah was helped in this effort by the long and bloody experience of the Shiite community with Israel.

Since the 1960s, the Shiite community has experienced three models of political mobilization: the model of the secular parties, the sectarian model of Amal, and the religiously oriented model offered by Hizballah. The secular model had done little to promote the Shiite community's common interests; its primary importance was reflected in the increased involvement of the Shiite masses in political activity. Al-Sadr's model never advocated radical reforms, but it was the first to organize the Shiite masses within a communal political framework. Its nonviolent protest movement has been increasingly challenged, however, since the early 1980s by the revolutionary Islamic model of Hizballah. The growth of Hizballah has accelerated the radicalization of the Lebanese Shiites, a process that has proceeded simultaneously with the increasing political empowerment of the community.

The Shiite Community's External Patronage

The Shiites were not the first Lebanese community to look toward an external patron with regional or international powers. For centuries, the Maronite Christians established a historical alliance with France, while the Sunnis have always regarded the Arab world as their natural milieu, culturally and politically. Their cordial ties with Egypt during the post-

colonial era were replaced more recently by links with Syria and Saudi Arabia.

Al-Sadr, himself Persian-born, was the pioneer in establishing Shiite political alliances with regional powers, particularly with the Syrian Baath regime. The alliance with the Syrian regime grew out of mutual political interests: Al-Sadr sought external patronage that could strengthen the Shiites domestically, while Asad sought Islamic legitimization of his regime. (Thus, in 1973 al-Sadr issued a *fatwa* recognizing the Alawi community in Lebanon as an integral part of Shiite Islam.[26])

The Islamic Revolution constituted a turning point in the development of the Shiite community's external relations. Contrary to Fouad Ajami's claim that the Islamic Revolution freed the Shiite community from the suspicion of being tied to Iran through what he called the "Persian connection," the affinity of the Lebanese Shiites with Iran has actually increased since 1979, and has been legitimized in the name of Islamic anti-Western revolutionary ideology.[27] Iran's patronage of the Shiite community culminated in the creation of Hizballah following the 1982 Israeli invasion. Hizballah could arguably be considered as a "demonstration effect" of the Islamic revolution. Nonetheless, new studies show beyond a shadow of doubt that the revolutionary regime was crucially involved in all developments leading up to the creation of Hizballah's organizational structure and in shaping its ideology.[28] Furthermore, Iran's patronage of Hizballah is not only based on an ideological-religious nexus but was accompanied by unlimited political, military, and monetary support, leading some to claim that Hizballah was a complete proxy of the Islamic Iranian regime. But under close examination, such a statement implies an ideologically motivated interpretation that tends toward oversimplification and ignores the objective conditions and internal factors that led to the emergence of Hizballah.[29]

The persistent Shiite search for foreign patronage did not emerge from nowhere, nor was it derived only from a sectarian affinity. It was deeply ingrained in the Shiite community's discontent with its political status within the Lebanese confessional system and was provoked by the state's deep-rooted policy of marginalization and neglect. Many Shiites claim that after decades of being marginalized and abandoned by the central government, they have lost their confidence in the Lebanese state's ability and willingness to fulfill the basic functions of government by providing them with security, infrastructure, and social services. Developing and consolidating ties with regional powers has been a way of compensating for this lack of political representation and material resources. The Lebanese Shiites have not sought to eliminate the Lebanese polity, nor have they developed irredentist tendencies toward Syria and Iran. At the same time, however, they have regarded these two countries as legitimate sources of support and as authentic milieus of political and cultural affiliation.

The desire for external patronage should be seen in this context, and as part of the Shiites' endeavors to better their status in terms of domestic and regional politics. It is obvious that the Shiites' political role in Lebanon would be negatively affected by a dramatic regime change in either Syria or Iran. The Shiites' political behavior is being shaped according to a "domino theory" model: They have identified Lebanon with the strategic interests of their patrons rather than adjusting their patronage network to Lebanese particularism. Although the importance of the Shiites' external alliances to their empowerment process cannot be underestimated, those alliances should be seen as a side effect of internal Lebanese dynamics and as a contributing factor rather than a main cause of the Shiites' empowerment, as some might claim. Furthermore, such external patronage carries a price tag that is not always in the Shiites' interests, as was proved by the Ta'if agreement, when the Shiite leadership was forced under Syrian pressure to concede its original demand regarding the elimination of the confessional system. This significant concession made by the Shiites to their Syrian allies was important for the successful implementation of the Ta'if agreement and subsequently paved the way for Syrian dominance in Lebanon, which remained unchallenged until al-Hariri's assassination in 2005.

Conclusion: Where the Community Is Now

Over five decades, the Shiite community has undergone striking social and political change, which has shifted the Shiites from the margins of the political community to its center. Some have claimed that the demography of Lebanon accounts for its politics, while others attribute the Shiite ascendancy to regional politics or religious revivalism. But in fact Shiite empowerment must be seen as an outcome of the four processes analyzed and described above, which have been at work since the 1960s. The erosion of the Shiites' commitment to the Lebanese state cannot be separated from the internal dynamics of the state's exclusion, marginalization, and discriminatory treatment of the Shiites over many years—and it was exacerbated by the Shiites' increasing consciousness of being the largest sect in the country in terms of demography, military force, and political mobilization. Shiite leaders recognize that under the current circumstances, no single group can dominate Lebanese politics; thus, they seek neither to seize power nor to dismantle Lebanon's territorial framework, but rather to control access to political power, as provided for in the Doha agreement. In addition, they realize that making far-reaching demands two decades after the end of the second civil war could unite an anti-communal coalition against them.[30]

Endnotes

1 For a detailed survey of the 2009 parliamentary election, see the website of the Lebanese TV station LBC or al-Hayat, June 9, 2009.*

2 The Doha agreement, reached on May 21, 2008, between the pro-Syrian opposition led by the Shiite parties of Hizballah-Amal and the pro-Western ruling coalition headed by the Sunni politician Sad al-Hariri, ended the political crisis that had stifled Lebanon for eighteen months. The agreement included four main

points: the election of the army commander, Michel Suleiman, as a new president; the formation of a national unity government composed of 30 ministers; amendment of the election law; and initiation of a national dialogue to promote the state's authority over all Lebanese territory.

3 An early indication might be found in Nasrallah's first speech following the publication of the results. He claimed that in Lebanon, "there is a difference between aparliamentary majority and a popular majority," an obvious clue of his community's numerical size. For the full text of his speech see: Mohamad Shmaysani, "Sayyed Nasrallah: We Accept Official Results; Let's Start Building our Country" *Al-Manar TV*, June 8, 2009.*

4 Meir Zamir, *The Foundation of Modern Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 82–83.

5 Raleph Crow, "Religious Sectarianism in the Lebanese Political System," *The Journal of Politics* 24, no. 3 (August 1962), pp. 510, 519; Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 98–99.

6 The skeptical attitude toward Saudi Arabia was related not only to the strong anti-Shiite bias of Wahabism but also to the basic reality that the Saudis have traditionally played the role of patron to the Sunni community in Lebanon. That the Shiites' reservations were justified was clear following the Ta'if agreement, one outcome of which was to strengthen the position of the Sunni prime minister at the expense of the Maronite president. See Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon after Tai'f: Is The Civil War Over?" *Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 463–464.

7 Ahmad Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 13; Michael Young, "Hezboallah's Other War," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2006; Richard Falk and Asli Bali, "International Law at the Vanshing Point," *Middle East Report*, no. 241 (Winter 2006), p. 40.

8 Augustus Norton, *Hezballah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 13.

9 These figures are based on Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, p. 50; Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men* (Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies, 2001), p. 3; Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlhor, *Shiite Lebanon: transnational religion and the making of national identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. xii; Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision.*

10 Augustus Norton, *Amal and the Shia* (Austin: University of Texas, 1987), pp. 80–81.

11 Hezbollah's creed was proclaimed for the first time in February 1985, in the manifesto entitled "An Open Letter to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and All Around the World." Fadil Abu-Nasir, *Hizballah, Haqaiq wa Abad* (Beirut: al-Sharika al-Ialamiya Lil- Kitab, 2003), pp. 71–74.

12 Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, p. 112.

13 See Hezbollah's election program in Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program* (Leiden: Amsterdam University Press [ISIM (International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World) Dissertations], 2006), pp. 40–41, 247–269.

14 Last March, in accordance with the Doha agreement, the Lebanese parliament approved an amendment to Article 21 of the constitution lowering the voting age to 18; this amendment will not be implemented before 2013, however. See Rania Hammoud, "A concern from the consequence, on the political scene since most of the youth are Shiiites: a Christian- Shiite debate in Lebanon over reducing the voting age to 18," *al-Arabiya*, March 24, 2009 (in arabic).* Bear in mind that the youth compose the largest segment of the Shiite population and according to the register of voters for the 2000 parliamentary election, those between 21-39 years, compose 55.4% of Shiite eligible voters. See: Kamal Faghali, al-Tawaif fi Lubnan (Beirut: Mukhtarat, 2002), pp. 32-33.

15 See Yves Schemeil, *Sociologie du Systeme Politique Libanais* (Grenoble: Service de reproduction des thèses de l'Université des sciences sociales de Grenoble, 1976), p. 63.

16 For an in-depth discussion of the dispute over Sheba Farms, see Asher Kaufman, "Who Owns the Shebaa Farms? Chronicle of a Territorial Dispute," *Middle East Journal* 56, no. 4 (Autumn 2002), 576–595.

17 Johnson, *All Honourable Men*, p. 158; Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullaah*, p. 14; Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, p. 38.

18 Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, p. 42; Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 178.

19 See the full text of Hasan Nasrallah's speech given on May 26, 2006, four days after the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, in Nicholas Noe, ed., *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Syyed Hassan Nasrallah* (New York: Verso, 2007), pp. 232–243.

20 See, for example, an article written by the Egyptian intellectual Sad al-Din Ibrahim making a comparison between Nasrallah and President Nasir, the symbol of Arab nationalism, in *al-Hayat*, December 12, 2006; see also Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, p. 95.

21 Antoine Messarra, *La Structure Sociale du Parlement Libanais (1920–1976)* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1977), pp. 195, 347–361.

22 The process of the collapse of the traditional leadership was widely discussed by Norton in *Amal and the Shia*, pp. 18–36.

23 Among these forces one should mention the Communist Party, the Organization of Communist Action, the Baath Party, and the Progressive Socialist Party. See Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, pp. 101–106.

24 Among these institutions were the High Islamic Shiite Council (established in 1969), Harakat al-Mahrumin- the Movement of Deprived (1974), the Amal militia (1975), and the vocational institute in Burj al-Shimali (the early 1960s). See Ahmad Beydoun, *al-Jumhuryya al-Mutaqatia* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 1999), pp. 335–337.

25 See Nasrallah's speech as quoted by *al-Safir*, April 10, 2007. For an in-depth discussion of Hezbollah's conception of Jihad and the struggle against Israel, see Nasrallah's lecture on Israel in his *Durus Fi Khat al-Imam* (Beirut: Jamiyat al-Marif al-Islamiya al-Thaqafiya, 1988), pp. 40–43, and Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, pp. 37–42, 99–100.

26 The regime's legitimacy had been questioned by the Islamic Brotherhood, who denounced it as the regime of a heretical group. See Moshe Maoz, *Asad:Tthe Sphinx of Damascus; A Political Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), p. 151.

27 Cf. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, p. 191.

28 Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, pp. 19, 24–26. See also H. E. Chehabi, "Iran and Lebanon in the Revolutionary Decade," in *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 209–220, where these circumstances are analyzed at length based on primary sources utilized for the first time.

29 Typical in this regard is the book by the Israeli military expert Shimon Shapira, *Hizballah between Iran and Lebanon* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 2000). See also the book written by Shaul Shay, *The Axis of Evil: Iran, Hizballah, and Palestinian Terror* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005).

30 See Nabih Berri's recent statement in *al-Hayat* of December 10, 2008, that the appropriate political circumstances do not yet exist for amendment of the Ta'if agreement, even though it is still a matter of contention.

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Brandeis University Crown Center
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